

# The news—briefly

## US orders secrecy pledge

Washington  
The White House, determined to stop leaks of classified information to reporters, ordered officials involved in national security to sign a secrecy pledge.

The order sets up a system under which every copy of a document circulated by the council will have a different number, identifying who has handled it.

On the cover sheet will be a notice that the document is to be read and discussed only by people authorized by law. It requires each person signing the cover sheet to cooperate with any investigation, which could include lie detector tests.

Monitor correspondent Richard J. Cattani reports the administration also backed off on an earlier attempt to shut off National Security Council leaks by limiting press access. New NSC classified information regulations drop a Jan. 12 rule requiring "pre-clearance and follow-up memorandum" for every press contact.

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## Harassment in the Pentagon

When the top leadership in the Pentagon begins to mandate "voluntary" lie detector tests for senior government policymakers in an amateurish effort to track down news leaks in the leakiest city in the world, the nation has sunk below even low comedy. Lie detectors are powerful medicine at the Central Intelligence Agency; the last stop on Deputy Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci's career before he moved over to the Pentagon, and Carlucci, by starting them in his new post, brought the fixation with him. Their use was a blunder that will reopen all the old CIA wounds and hurt the Administration.

A corollary question is why the volunteers for the lie detector tests volunteered to take them at all. There was snickering—hollow snickering—all over Washington at the spectacle of senior officials strapping themselves into the polygraph chair and sweating out answers to trick questions. It was a disgraceful ordeal for those who submitted. The impact on morale and mutual confidence will far outweigh the petty return from exposing some loose-tongued bureaucrat, which has not yet happened. If grown men in the Central Intelligence Agency want to play James Bond games, that is a matter for those who really volunteer. To export such nonsense to the Defense Dept., whose military forces are sworn to risk their lives in defense of the nation, is contrary to what the United States is all about. Such methods are right at home in the Soviet Union, not here.

The sad fact is that most of the uproar over so-called leaks involves subjects that are a long way from national security. Advance word on such issues as Administration urban programs and tax exemptions for private schools brought presidential thunder, but government agencies then overreacted by virtually severing contact with the press for working level officials in the most national security innocuous offices of the government.

Even a Defense Dept. story that figured in the explosion—a report from a Defense Resources Board meeting that the Reagan defense program was underfunded by \$750 billion—was hardly a matter of national security. Unquestionably, it was highly sensitive politically. As usual, it was the political hot potato that generated the outcry that the security of the nation was being breached.

No truly democratic society is ever going to have a meeting of the minds completely between the advocates of complete freedom of information and those of complete secrecy. A point often lost sight of in the conflict is to whom the information belongs fundamentally. Government classifiers often behave like some taxing authorities who assume all private income belongs to the government, which then decides how much the earner will get to share. The people who paid for it actually have the first claim on the government's decisions and actions, and it is by their leave that the military can classify to protect the lives of its troops and civilian citizenry.

There is a drift toward censorship by some in the

Reagan Administration, and by some in Congress who are flirting with a U.S. version of the British Official Secrets Act. Despite President Reagan's press conference avowal that his will be an open Administration, the Iron Curtain is clanging down between the government and the press much as it did in the darker days of the Nixon Administration.

Retired Adm. Daniel J. Murphy, now Vice President Bush's chief of staff but deputy under secretary of Defense for policy review at the time of the so-called Stealth leaks in the summer of 1980, provided some common sense on the subject when the House Armed Services investigations subcommittee looked into the case. Murphy carried out witch hunts of his own during his Central Intelligence Agency years, but his comments to the subcommittee suggested they were a waste of time. The Defense Dept. had decided years ago not to investigate newsmen or place them under surveillance to find their sources, he said, based on the rights of the press to "freely gather information without harassment or curtailment by the government." The courts in the Pentagon Papers case during the Vietnam conflict interpreted the rights of the press very broadly in what it had the legal right to publish, and that Defense policy was in line with the legal precedents. Then Murphy went on to recount the historic futility of attempting to track down leaks within the Defense Dept.'s own ranks, for which he was unfairly criticized by the subcommittee as being complacent. Often enough, he told the subcommittee, the information has been distributed not to tens but to hundreds or thousands within the Defense establishment. Frequently enough, when there is a complaint about a leak of classified information, the information turns out to be no longer classified.

"I think it is possible to influence this process by instilling greater security discipline from the top down," Murphy said, "and this can be done by positive leadership moves. I don't think the solution is prosecutions, or a more repressive climate of probes and checks and harassment of the news media."

Repressive climate is exactly what is now gripping the Pentagon and the rest of the government in the latest flap over leaks, which is itself a misnomer. A leak defined by a journalist is the story that the competition got as opposed to the exciting exclusive in his own pages when the situation is reversed. To the government, it is a story that got out without official sanction, regardless of whether the public had a right to know.

Repression is absolutely the wrong impression that Ronald Reagan needs at home or abroad at this critical point in his Administration. Too many of his political opponents believe he is a nascent oligarch hiding behind a genial smile. Harassment in the Pentagon will simply confirm that belief on the part of his opposition and dismay his own constituency, which rode into office calling for more, not less, freedom from government control.

—William H. Gregory

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# Secrecy Vow Ordered for Key Officials

## Reagan Tightens Security; Drops Rule on Media

By JACK NELSON,  
*Times Washington Bureau Chief*

WASHINGTON—The Reagan Administration Tuesday ordered officials involved in national security to sign a secrecy pledge and agree to cooperate in investigations of leaks of classified information.

The order, part of a crackdown President Reagan ordered on unauthorized disclosures of national security information, also strictly limits access by government officials to such information. In addition, it calls for Atty. Gen. William French Smith to review the effectiveness of existing laws on such disclosures.

However, the order was not as stringent as some intelligence officials had proposed. In fact, it dropped one provision of a Jan. 12 presidential directive that the press and some government information officers had criticized: a requirement that government employees get a senior official's permission before contacting the media and then file a written report on the contact.

### Earlier Directive Supplanted

The order, signed by William P. Clark, Reagan's assistant for national security, superseded the Jan. 12 directive.

Reagan has spoken out frequently in recent weeks about leaks of national security information. In his Jan. 12 directive he referred to a "hemorrhage" of leaks and warned that "all legal methods" would be used to investigate the situation.

Reagan was particularly upset by a report in *Time* magazine that tipped the Administration's hand on the sale of jet fighters to Taiwan. It enraged the government of the People's Republic of China, which had not been informed beforehand.

One other story, out of the Pentagon, was a short article in the *Washington Post* saying crates of some new types of aircraft had been spotted in Cuba. After the story appeared, the crates were whisked away by the Cubans and have not been spotted since by U.S. surveillance.

### A Determined Effort

David R. Gergen, Reagan's communications director, said the new order "reflects a determined effort by all concerned to draw a proper balance between the legitimate need of the public's right to know and the need of the government in protecting classified information."

Clark ordered all departments to hold the number of persons having access to national security information to an "absolute minimum" and to "strictly control document dissemination and reproduction to carry out existing law."

His order sets up a system under which each copy of a document circulated by the National Security Council will be affixed with a numbered cover sheet bearing a notation that includes the secrecy pledge and agreement to cooperate in investigations. The cover sheet contains this notice:

"The attached document contains sensitive National Security Council information. It is to be read and discussed only by persons authorized by law."

"Your signature acknowledges you are such a person and your promise you will show or discuss information contained in the document only with persons who are authorized by law to have access to this document."

"Persons handling this document acknowledge he or she knows and understands the security law relating thereto and will cooperate fully with any lawful investigation by the United States government into any unauthorized disclosure of classified information contained herein."

The order requests Atty. Gen. Smith to convene by March 1 an interagency group to report to the President on the effectiveness of existing statutes and executive orders prohibiting unauthorized disclosure of classified information.

### 'Chilling Effect' Forces Change

Gergen said Clark had dropped the provision in the Jan. 12 directive regulating media contacts because of a feeling that it had "a chilling effect" on government-press relations.

After the directive was issued, that provision was criticized by newsmen, including Barrie Dunsmore of ABC-TV, president of the State Department Correspondents Assn., who wrote Clark a letter saying the directive already had caused some officials to cancel appointments with journalists.

Clark met with Dunsmore and several other reporters Monday before deciding to delete that provision from his order.

After the new order was issued, Dunsmore said, "I'm delighted that the section on media contacts was dropped. When I talked with Clark Monday, the draft of the order we were shown still had that section in it, and it would have been devastating if it had been implemented."

Speaking of the Administration's recent anti-leak activities and the new Clark order, Gergen said:

"What much of this endeavor of the last few weeks has done clearly—beyond and above the four corners of this document—is send a message through the ranks that the President regards the unauthorized disclosure of classified information as a serious matter. At the same time, he recognizes the need for a continued flow of legitimate information, and it (the order) is intended to recognize that flow and permit it to go forward unimpeded."